

Once Upon a Time . . .

The Fanciful Expressions of Interim SAIS Director Steven Jackson

The [Aug-07 mobbing](#) of USMNEWS.NET editor, Marc DePree, has been the subject of a number of reports here at USMNEWS.NET. Parts [I](#) and [II](#) of "Memo to Martha" explain in graphic detail the misrepresentations and mischaracterizations in Interim CoB Dean Alvin Williams' 21-Aug-07 memo to USM President Martha Saunders requesting that Saunders terminate the employment of DePree, a professor of accounting at USM.



Alvin Williams




Martha Saunders

Williams' 21-Aug-07 memo to Saunders came in response to a memo addressed to Williams that was written on 21-Aug-07 by the Interim SAIS Director, Steven Jackson.

The salutations of Jackson's memo are shown below:

August 21, 2007	
To:	Dr. Alvin J. Williams, Interim Dean College of Business
From:	Dr. Steve Jackson, Interim Director School of Accountancy and Information Systems
Re:	Employment Termination of Dr. Marc Depree, Associate Professor School of Accountancy and Information Systems (SOAIS)



Jackson begins the body of his memo to Williams with the following paragraph:

I returned to USM in January of 2007 after being gone for over ten years. I started my career here in 1992 and stayed until 1996 when I left to take a position at The University of Southern Maine. During my first four years here the atmosphere was very friendly and collegial. The office doors were always open for friendly interaction between faculty and staff and students. The bottom line was it was a great place to be. I was primarily assigned to teach on the coast but did spend a lot of time in Hattiesburg. My daughter was a student in the School of Professional Accountancy during that four year period, earning her degree in the spring of 1996. She was a student worker in the SOAIS during two of her four years at USM. She commented to me numerous times about what a great place to be, as a student and student worker.

Jackson informs Williams that he (Jackson) had been employed in USM's College of Business Administration from 1992 until 1996, when he "left to take a position at The University of Southern Maine." This period, 1992-1996, is the heart of a period in the CoB's history when its then-Dean, H. Tyrone Black, was in the process of moving the then-CBA from its past "country club" reputation to being seen as an organization that would be respected for its research accomplishments by its institutional brethren. Interestingly, Jackson chose to leave the CBA during that push, and he headed north for a different USM (University of Southern Maine). Is it possible that Jackson favored the "country club" existence over a solid research reputation for the College?



Steven Jackson

The next few lines of Jackson's memo support a "yes" to the question above. Jackson describes the CBA-GC from 1992-1996, the part of the organization that [most resisted Black's goals](#) for research quality, as having an "atmosphere [that] was very friendly . . ." and one where "office doors were always open for friendly interaction between faculty and staff and students." According to Jackson, "The bottom line was it was a great place to be." This "country club" existence, one wherein university faculty teach a few classes on a couple of days each week and the rest of the time they hang out in a coffee lounge, laughing and swapping so-called war stories, is one that is breaking the backs of Mississippi taxpayers, but one that Jackson and the CoB's current crop of accountants seem to want to see a return to. The next section of Jackson's memo gets straight to the point of the matter -- the termination of DePree.

As I read the faculty letters and observe the atmosphere here in the fall of 2007 it saddens me to realize that one person can have such a destructive impact on a College of Business and a School of Accounting and Information Systems.

In the passage above, Jackson lays the blame for the destruction of the country club atmosphere in the SAIS directly at the feet of DePree, and not at those of Black. In the next paragraph, inserted below, Jackson offers a brief description of how that atmosphere has been, in his (Jackson's) opinion, ruined by DePree.

Faculty no longer leave their doors open except when they have scheduled office hours, you see very few students interacting with faculty and there is almost no faculty interaction in the suite of offices of the accounting faculty. I was informed almost immediately upon my arrival in January of 2007 to not talk in the halls and to be very careful what I said in my office. I purchased a radio to turn on while meeting with other faculty to muffle the sound. I was told to not send emails on the USM network because Dr. Depree had access to all emails and would use them on his website. In other words this was a totally different environment than the one I left in 1996. In my opinion Dr. Depree has done all he can to undermine anything productive being done in the SOAIS. He has tried to undermine the AACSB accreditation effort and has wrongfully accused the administration of plagiarism of our mission statements. He is the sole member of the SOAIS that is neither AQ nor PQ for AACSB.

According to Jackson, accounting faculty no longer leave their doors open except when they have scheduled office hours. Doesn't that situation pretty much describes many universities in the South and across the U.S.? Jackson adds that "there is almost no faculty interaction in the suite of offices of the accounting faculty." Let's see: (1) [Jackson](#) spends most of his week on the Gulf Coast; (2) Gwen Pate works in JGH 110 as the Director of [UG Services](#); (3) [Jim Henderson is out playing golf at](#) the Hattiesburg Country Club; (4) [Patty \(Polk\) Munn](#) is an instructor -- no conversation with her would involve research-related matters; (5) [Rod Posey, who has published](#) "more than 100" articles, is probably working on events for one of his civic clubs or for the church where he serves as pastor; (6) Mary Anderson is on the Coast; (7) Charles Jordan lives in Panama City, Florida (yes, you read that correctly); (8) [Marvin Albin lives](#) in Navarre, Florida (yes, once again you read that accurately). From what we can tell, the extent of potential faculty use of the accounting offices suite would involve professor of accounting, Stan Clark, sitting in the suite by himself. (It has already been reported that DePree rarely uses the suite, opting instead to do his work either at home or at other parts of the campus.)

Charles Jordan says the CoB used the Central Missouri State University AACSB definitions "without proper citation." Jackson says such an act is not [plagiarism](#). Or, at least it's not "plagiarism." On a side note, it's interesting to see Jackson point out to Williams that he (Jackson) arrived in the CoB in **January of 2007**. If so, [how did Jackson](#)

[qualify for a 2007 merit raise](#) -- a raise awarded based on accomplishments while in the CoB? Jackson was working at Loyola University in New Orleans during 2006 and the preceding period.

In the final section of page 1 (see below) of Jackson's 2-page memo to Williams, he (Jackson) indicates that he (Jackson) had been the Interim SAIS Director for "only 21 days" at the time he penned his memo to Williams. How's that for judicious administration? Just three weeks into the job Jackson recommends that Williams terminate DePree, a faculty member with a significantly more impressive vita than Jackson's and one with whom Jackson had not had a formal conversation with (about the matters presented in the memo) at any time during the 3-week period about these pressing issues.

While I have only been interim director for 21 days and on faculty only spring and summer of 2007, I completely support the faculty requests for his dismissal. I feel we cannot move the school forward with his disruptive behavior. I also feel very uncomfortable when I am on the Hattiesburg campus and actually am concerned for my safety. His behavior at the spring faculty meeting was one of the most frightening experiences of my academic life. I believed for a split second that he had a weapon which turned out to be his cell phone but his outburst was very violent.

Jackson also reiterates that he (Jackson) joined the CoB in 2007. Again we would ask: "Why the 2007 merit raise?" So, Jackson feels uncomfortable while on the Hattiesburg campus. That's probably mostly because he has to wear a shirt and tie in Hattiesburg, while a Hawaiian print shirt passes for good down at the campus (COB-GC) many refer to as the "country club."



Sami Dakhliya

Now, let's address what Jackson calls one of the most frightening experiences of his (Jackson's) academic life. That came at the end of the 4-May-07 CoB faculty meeting, wherein assistant professor of economics Sami Dakhliya launched an attack-by-proclamation on DePree. For "a split second" Jackson believed that he saw DePree brandish "a weapon." That "weapon" turned out to be DePree's "cell phone." If all academicians classified Jackson's experience the way he does, no one would make it

through a day of teaching. There you are, facing dozens of students, many of whom aren't satisfied with their grade in your class. They believe their angst is *your* fault, and all of them are toting cell phones. At :15, :30, :45, or :50 past the hour, they all abruptly rise at the same time, and pull out their cell phones. How does Jackson make it through the day, surrounded by marginally put-off young adults, all brandishing one or more cell phones or cell phone-like devices? It's difficult to imagine. What a violent existence he leads.

Of course, Jackson believes his own paranoia warrants DePree's termination from USM. He says so in the wrap-up to his memo:

Based on what I have observed and read in the letters from the faculty in the school, I feel Dr. Depree must be terminated to maintain the atmosphere needed to conduct our business as a School of Accountancy and Information Systems at USM.